N Ews

December 24, 1966

Mrs. Willian Cohen
622 Burgundy St.,
New Orleans, La.

Dear Mrs. Cohen,

Please excuse the delay in writing you. Whenever I am away on a trip an enormous accumulation awaits me at home and there are some notes I must type before they flee my mind and attention.

I delayed writing hoping to be able to include a transcript of our interview with Philip Geraci III. However, the special attention given the tape recorder when it was intercepted with my luggage requires that it again get factory service. It has not been returned, hence we have not be able to transcribe the tapes.

The day after we spoke to Philip I returned home. He and what he said were on my mind, so, in order not to forget what I regarded as the salient things, I wrote out a memo on the plane. I have read it, for some of the things he said have been on my mind, and this is what leads me to write you at this time. In general, I think he and his mother were honest. There are some things on which he could perhaps have said more. There is one point on which I believe Mrs. Geraci was being a bit cautious. Because she is a concerned mother, somewhat overly protective, perhaps, this may be understandable. Because I know you are concerned with his and the family's interest, I tell you that my recollection is sharp on this. She said the father identified "Mario" as Mario Bermudez. They said they had never seen him, but they also said that "the children" had identified him by name. Whether or not they included their son with "the children" I cannot be sure of without replaying the tape, but there is no doubt they did include Diona Turner and Raul Naves. Because they did complain to both the high school and the junior high school in the area, there may be an official record. More, Raul volunteered to me that Mario had had Philip, and when Diona learned I had spoken to the father and the mother, she asked me, "Did they tell you about Mario?". There remains the chance that the children were in error. However, with the close relationship between Bermudez and Shaw, I think I need not emphasize the potential significance of this. Also, while Philip said Mario had merely told him of having a purple car. Raul volunteered much more about this, describing the car, giving the make, and explaining how it was used as bait with Philip, a rather common device among homosexuals making advances to young boys.

You recognized the importance of Philip's having been taken from Garrison's jurisdiction and questioned by the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's office the night of Ferrie's death, as he put it. It actually was the next morning, from his own account. Let me explain this a bit further. As I suspected, this was not done at the behest of or in the interest of Garrison's office. Despite what Philip and his mother were told, no copy of the report or the later taped interview were given Garrison's office. They were entirely unaware of this until I checked with Louis Ivon and Andrew Sciambra.

If we take Philip at his word, he had but a single homosexual experience in his life, and that was not with Ferrie. This may not be accurate, but is there any reason to believe he had any kind of an involvement with Ferrie? On the basis of what we know, there is not. Ferrie got into difficulties when sex charges were pressed against him well before Philip was connected with the Civil Air Patrol Cadets. There was no apparent reason for any Jefferson Parish interest in Ferrie, his death not having occured in that jurisdiction, and there was no reason to connect Philip with Ferrie or his death. Can you imagine what would have happened to the sheriff's office had they given every member of the cadets the time and attention they gave Philip? Their interest, then, was exceptional and not for the reasons given.

Remember, he told us that they questioned him about Dione, and the mother, as I recall, confirms his statement they stipulated their interest in her was because she was part of a "sex ring". You may recall I got him to repeat this several times. You have to know Dione to know how utterly unlikely this is. I doubt you can with difficulty find a less effeminate girl. She has a brilliant mind, but she has none of the attributes for this interest. However, Dione has told me a fantastic story of her and Philip's other involvements, including with Oswald. While I cannot substantiate it, and Philip has denied it, and while she is without doubt a pathological liar (and one of remarkable proficiency), an enormous amount of what she told me does check out, particularly on Bringuier. She has told me she and the others had CIA connection. I do not credit it, but she has given me documentary proof of this employment. I tell you she is capable of having forged it. However, a copy of this was sent to Garrison's office, she says by another, which I doubt. Although they are entirely without confidence in her, they do know this. She is quite capable of surfacing in some manner in the defense in the Shaw trials, or in the papers, which she would dearly love, particularly now, when she is in other and serious difficulties. Her attorney represents a number of those involved. He is Milton Brener. She also told me what I do not believe (yet I do have partial and unbiased confirmation), that Ferrie gave her flying lessons. She had much accurate information about him. I do not know the source.

So we have Philip, taken out of Garrison's jurisdiction, by an office that had neither interest nor reason for it, and questioned, from his account, about irrelevant things? That does not make sense. I am not casting doubt on him or the mother. I am persuaded this did happen. I am suggesting those who did this questioning had interests other than they specified. Dione was not part of any sex ring and there is no reason to presume Philip had any connection with Ferrie. And this immediately upon Ferrie's death, and Garrison says Ferrie and Shaw were co-conspirators? Now Philip gave us but a single name, that of the deputy who had conducted the investigation when he ran away. Nothing came up in this investigation, the report xxx of which I showed you, to warrant his interest in Philip when Ferrie died. And the man accompanying him, from what Philip said, could well have been one who was Oswald's age, was in Ferrie's CAP Unit, was a member of the New Orleans vice squad, and gave entirely inadequate testimony before the Warren Commission. That he did this in Jefferson Parish, in company with the Jefferson deputy, alleging falsely this was for Garrison, does excite interest.

I think in everyone's interest, when I am there again, which will be before the Shaw trial starts, we or I should speak to Philip again. It might be better to do this without his mother being present, because he may be embarrassed by some of it and because he may be unwilling to let her know that he may have lied to her in the past. If you or she want her to be present, that is okay with me. If you do not want to be present or feel you cannot take the time, you have my assurance I will not in any way abuse him or take advantage of him. I think you know from what you observed I am also trying to serve his interest. Here, however,

with the passing of time. I also believe that this should be done as soon as possible, before there is any possibility of his being publicly involved in anything. I just cannot believe he was subjected to such an unusual questioning, later repeated on tape, threatened, with his parents involved, for no reason at all. There is every reason to believe it had some connection with Garrison's investigation. Without doubt, Dione knows about it, for she made a number of elliptical references to it to me.

Please do not misunderstand the foregoing. When I said if you could not participate, I'd speak to Philip alone, I was not suggesting you absent yourself. I would much prefer that you or your husband participate. When I said I'd prefer that the mother not be with Philip, I did not mean her recollection should not be recorded. I think it should be. But in the interests of learning the truth, I think they should be spoken to separately. She has a very natural desire to protect her son. She may not know the best way to do it. With the Warren Commission, her's was not the best way.

If we can do this, I think it is still possible to avoid any public Garrison interest in Philip. He wants only Philip's knowledge, not his embarrassment. Further, in the event the other side makes any moves, we will be in the best possible position if we are not taken by surprise and know the truth in advance. Aside from what, as an experienced lawyer, you might be able to anticipate, I encourage you to consider what Dione is capable of, for whatever motive, and to regard the Geraci evaluation of Raul as accurate. He might have some kind of involvement and he is, I think, capable of using Philip if he sees the chance or if it seems desireable to him.

My plans are not yet fixed, for the date of the actual beginning of the Shaw trial is not yet firm. My best guess is that about the middle of the month I will return to New Orleans. I will keep you posted. Meanwhile, Mrs. Geraci did promise to do two things that should be done. Perhaps, with this new development, she should not now ask for the return of what the Jefferson Sheriff's Office has, for this might signal to them. That can be done after we learn what they were really interested in. However, she should get in touch with her dentist and establish the date on which she drove the boys to near Bringuier's.

Philip promised to make notes of anything that occurred to him as a consequence of my questioning. I would appreciate it if you would remind him of this and its potential importance to him and ask him to include all thing that may not seem particularly relevant to him on the ground they may have meaning to me. If you recall that for whatever motive, no matter how patriotic he thought it may have been, he was connected with real fascists and with two men who did have a kind of connection with the murder of the President and a threat to do it, what may seem irrelevant to him may be quite significant. Both of these men had federal connections, one as an intelligence man, the other as at least an informant. Ask him also, please, to include anything he knows about Dione and Raul, whatever, if anything, Bringuier might have told him, and anything he may know or have heard of any of the principals in the current case or those connected with him. I have the Mario picture, which I had forgotten at home, and will show it to him. Aside from the mustache, his description does fit. They have a paper in their Mario's handwriting. We should also have that any anything else they have in any way connected with this. In writing at this length, it is not my intention to burden you. I do, however, want to inform you as completely as I can. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg